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THE DATE OF THE FIRST SHAPING OF THE CUCHULAINN SAGA

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THE following paper is an attempt to fix on archaeological and historical grounds the period within which the remarkable set of poems which centre round Conchobar Mac Nessa, king of Ulster, and his nephew, Cuchulainn Mac Sualtaim, first took shape. This subject is all the more important as in these poems we have the oldest existing literature of any of the peoples who dwelt to the north of the Alps. With the evidence from language bearing on the problem the present writer is not competent to deal, but it will be found that in all that he has to say from his particular standpoint there is nothing that runs counter to the results obtained from the linguistic side by the most eminent Gaelic scholars.

According to the native Irish annals, Conchobar and Cuchulainn lived about the beginning of the Christian era. Cuchulainn was the greatest of all the Red Branch knights in Ulster who were in the service of Conchobar, and who resorted every year to Conchobar's capital, Emain Macha (now Navan Rath, close to Armagh) to be drilled in martial exercises.

By some, indeed (for example, M. D'Arbois du Jubainville), Cuchulainn is held to be an ancient Celtic god, but, though his exploits are supernatural, there is no more reason for regarding him as a god than there is for so treating Achilles, or Ajax, or Roland and the other paladins of Charlemagne. It has been the practice of certain scholars to speak glibly of heroic personages as worn-out or faded gods, but though we have abundant instances of heroes becoming gods, as, for example, Heracles, Castor, and Pollux, it has never yet been shown that the reverse process has taken place in the mythology of any people. There is certainly no ground in Irish tradition for believing that Cuchulainn was once a god. He was the son of Conchobar's sister Dechtire, but there is some uncertainty as regards his paternity, for he is variously stated to have been the son of Sualtaim, a famous

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Ulster warrior, or of Conchobar himself, or else of Lug Mac Ethlind, one of the divine heroes from the *Síd*, or fairy mound. The doubt about his father, as well as his affiliation to his mother's brother Conchobar, are quite in keeping with what we know otherwise of ancient Irish society, for not only was polyandry in vogue, but Strabo expressly states¹ that the Irish had intercourse with their sisters. Moreover, the mere fact that another tradition regarded him as sprung from Lug Mac Ethlind, an ancient hero, does not at all indicate that he was a god, for in primitive societies there is always a tendency to ascribe a divine parentage to men who stand out pre-eminently in prowess beyond their fellows.

The greatest of the poems of the heroic cycle of Ulster is the *Tain Bo Cualnge*, or *The Cattle Raid of Cualnge*. There are three chief MS. sources for the poem: (1) *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, *The Book of the Dun Cow*, which dates from about A.D. 1100. The version is an old one, though with some late additions in later language. (2) *The Yellow Book of Lecan*, a late fourteenth-century MS. The version in it is substantially the same as that in the preceding, the beginning is missing, but the end is given. It does not contain some of the late additions in *The Book of the Dun Cow*, and the *Yellow Book*, late as it is, often gives an older and a better text than the earlier manuscript. (3) *The Book of Leinster*, written before 1160, gives a longer version, which is later both in style and language than the other two, and is much less interesting than the older recensions.

The *Yellow Book of Lecan*, our source for the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster' which forms the closing part of the *Tain Bo Cualnge*, contains linguistic forms as old as the Irish glosses which date from the eighth century, a fact which well coincides with the tradition that the poem was recovered by the bard, Senchan Torpeist, in the latter part of the seventh century. There likewise is a tradition that St. Patrick called up a vision of Cuchulainn in his chariot to persuade King Laegaire of Tara to become a Christian. Moreover, the Ossianic cycle of poems is, by universal tradition, later than the Cuchulainn Saga, and Ossian is said to have been a contemporary of St. Patrick, and to have recited his poems to that saint. Now the Ossianic cycle celebrates the exploits of the Fianna or Fena of Erin, whose domination seems to have lasted from the reign of Con of the Hundred Battles (A. D. 177-212) to that of Carbery of the Liffey (A. D. 279-97), and they were at the zenith of their power in the time of Cormac Mac Art (A. D. 254-77) under their great champion, Finn Mac Cumhal, King Cormac's son-in-law,

¹ 167, 19 (Didot).

whose name is still familiar in every part of Ireland, and who, according to the Annals, was killed as an old man beside the Boyne in A.D. 283. There is, therefore, a consensus of native tradition that Conchobar and his great-nephew and their contemporaries, whose deeds are enshrined in the *Tain Bo Cualnge*, must have flourished considerably earlier than Finn and his comrades, and, therefore, not very far from the time of Christ. There is a prima facie case in favour of the truth of these statements, because the whole spirit of the poems is strongly pagan in spite of the natural tendency of ecclesiastical transcribers to modify them by the introduction of Christian sentiments and allusions. The oldest forms of the poems must date, therefore, from a period at least anterior to the introduction of Christianity. Is it possible to get any evidence which may enable us to fix more definitely the period in which they first took shape? Investigation will soon show that the warriors described in the older epic differ essentially in method of fighting from those who figure in the Ossianic cycle, while they agree not only in that respect but in physique, in armature, and in dress with the Gauls of France, of northern Italy and the Danube valley, and with the Belgic tribes whom Caesar found in possession of all south-eastern Britain, into which they had passed from the Continent at no very remote date. In other words, the object of this paper is to prove that the culture represented in the Cuchulainn Saga is that known to English archaeologists as 'late Celtic' (the term first applied to it by the late Sir A. W. Franks), and as La Tène by Continental writers. The latter term has been used because it was at La Tène, the Helvetian settlement on Lake Neuchatel, that this culture first came into notice, and it is preferable to 'late Celtic' because it does not beg any question of race or nationality. This culture beyond all doubt belonged to that people known as *Keltoi* by the Greeks and *Galli* by the Romans, and it extended on the Continent from B.C. 400 till the Christian era, and naturally for some time longer in Britain, which only fell under Roman domination a century later than the conquest of Gaul.

The La Tène period has now been generally subdivided into three: La Tène I (B.C. 400-250), La Tène II (B.C. 250-150), and La Tène III (B.C. 150-A.D. 1). This culture is characterized by a style of ornament derived from Greek sources through the lands at the head of the Adriatic, by swords, shields, helmets, and brooches of peculiar types, by the use of bronze horns, and by the cremation of the dead, especially in its later period, whilst in ancient literature the Gauls are regularly described as wearing *bracae*, or breeches.

If, then, it can be shown that (1) there are abundant remains of the La Tène period found in Ireland, (2) that the culture represented in the Cuchulainn epic is identical with the La Tène, and (3) that the great chiefs described in that epic have the physical characteristics of the Keltoi or Gauls, we will be justified in concluding that the poems were first composed when that culture was still living. But as it had died out in Gaul by A. D. 1, and almost certainly in Britain by A. D. 100, it is very improbable that it lingered much later than A. D. 150 in Ireland, more especially in face of the tradition already cited that the Fianna, who are admittedly posterior to the Cuchulainn period, were already dominant by A. D. 177.

Physical Characteristics. Much confusion has arisen from the inaccurate use of the terms 'Celt' and 'Celtic'.¹ Thus it has been the practice to speak of the dark-complexioned people of France, Great Britain, and Ireland as 'black Celts', although the ancients never applied the term 'Celt' to any dark-complexioned people, for great stature, a xanthochrous complexion, and blue or grey eyes were to them the special characteristics of the Celt or German. That a certain number of true Celts, by which I mean a large, fair-haired, and blue-eyed people, were in Britain is certain, for the Belgic tribes of the south and east of England (to whom are ascribed the relics of La Tène culture found in this island) were undoubtedly xanthochrous, as is clear from the description of Boudicca (Boadicea) which has reached us, and also from Caesar's statement that the people of that part of Britain were the same as the Belgic tribes on the other side of the channel.

Some years ago I called attention to the native Irish tradition of the coming into Ireland in the second century B. C. of a tall, fair-haired, conquering race, the Tuatha de Danann, and I pointed² out that it was probably this race who had introduced the brooches of the La Tène type found in that country (see *infra*). Thus, in the very ancient Irish story of Edain, daughter of Etar, an Ulster chief (whose traditional date is about B. C. 100), we are told that as 'Edain and her maids were bathing in the bay a horseman came pricking over the plain. He was Midir, the great Tuatha de Danann, chief of Bri Leith in Co. Longford. He wore a long flowing green cloak gathered around him, and a shirt under that, interwoven with threads of red and gold. A brooch (*eo*) of gold was in his cloak (across), which reached his shoulders at either side. He had a shield of silver with a rim of gold at his back, with trappings

¹ Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, vol. i, pp. 370-1.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 582-3.

of silver and a boss of gold; and he had in his hand a sharp-pointed spear covered with rings of gold from its socket to its heel. He wore fair yellow hair coming over his forehead, and his forehead was bound with a fillet of gold to keep his hair from disorder'.¹

Now Conchobar, the king of Ulster, who with his nephew Cuchulainn, forms the centre of the earliest Irish epic, was descended from the Tuatha de Danann, and he is described in the *Tain Bo Cualnge*² as 'a warrior fair and tall and long and high, beautiful, the fairest of the kings his form, in the front of the company, hair white-yellow has he, and it curly, neat, bushy, ridged, reaching to the hollow of his shoulders. Tunic curly, purple, folded round him; a brooch excellent, of red gold, in his cloak on his breast; eyes very grey, very fair, in his head; a face purple, has he, and it narrow below and broad above; a beard forked, very curly, gold-yellow he has; a white shirt, hooded, with red ornamentation, round about him; a sword gold-hilted on his shoulders; a white shield with rivets of gold; a broad grey spear-head on a slender shaft in his hand'.

Again we find that in the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster' the men of Muirtheimne, the hereditary patrimony of Cuchulainn, are described as men with 'long, fair, yellow hair'. From these passages we are fully justified in the inference that the Tuatha de Danann had a great stature, yellow hair, and light-coloured eyes. In other words, the characteristics invariably ascribed to the Keltoid by the ancients.

Method of Fighting. In the Cuchulainn cycle all the warriors fight from chariots, and there is never any mention of men mounted on horseback. Cuchulainn's chariot is described as drawn by two horses, 'swift, vehement, furious, small-headed,' one of which was grey, the other black. In the *Wooing of Emer*, we are told that Cuchulainn went to Alba, i. e. Scotland, to perfect himself in feats of arms, and that he learned there the use of the scythed chariot, and in such a chariot he set out to see Emer after his return from Alba. Though by Caesar's time the Gauls had discarded the use of the chariot in war, and men mounted on excellent horses³ formed the chief weapon of the Gauls in their death-struggle against the Romans, it is clear from both literary and monumental evidence that at no long time previously had the chariot been in universal use among all the Celts of Gaul and North Italy. Diodorus⁴ makes it plain that down

¹ O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. iii, p. 163.

² Faraday's transl., p. 119.

³ Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, p. 99.

⁴ v. 29.

to a late date they, like the Homeric Achaeans, had regularly gone to war in two-horse chariots, containing each a warrior and a charioteer: the former first hurled spears called *saunia* at the foe, and then dismounted to finish the combat at close quarters with the sword, the latter doubtless being of the La Tène type (Fig. 3). Propertius, too, in a passage cited in full on a later page, represents a Belgic chief, Virдумarus, as fighting from a chariot. The opening of many tumuli in Champagne has brought to light the remains of Gaulish chieftains, who were interred seated on their chariots, the horses and trappings being buried along with them.¹ The iron tires of the wheels have regularly survived. These interments, as is proved by the swords and fibulae of the La Tène type, cannot be earlier than B. C. 400, and are probably to be set a century later. At the battle of Sentinum in Etruria (B. C. 292) in the Third Samnite War when the Romans overthrew the combined Samnites and Gauls, the latter had a thousand chariots (*essedae*) and cars (*carrī*), the charge of which completely routed the Roman cavalry.²

Though by B. C. 60 the Gauls had ceased to use the chariot in battle, yet Caesar found the Belgic tribes of south-eastern Britain using the war-chariot as well as cavalry, whilst the Maeatae and Caledonians, two chief tribes of northern Britain, continued to use chariots and apparently no mounted men for a considerable period longer.³ The iron tires of the wheels and other remains of chariots have been found at Driffield, Arras, and Hessleskew, in Yorkshire, the district occupied by the Belgic Parisii according to Ptolemy.⁴

Cuchulainn is said to have gone to Alba (Scotland) to perfect himself in feats of arms, and learned there the use of the scythed chariot. But as the Caledonians continued to use chariots when these had ceased to be employed for war in southern Britain, Irish chiefs may well have learned improved methods of chariot-fighting from the Caledonians.

Like the wheels of the chariots found in Champagne and in Yorkshire barrows Cuchulainn's chariot-wheels are represented as shod with iron tires. Though no iron tires of wheels found in Ireland have been identified as belonging to the La Tène period, many undoubted relics of chariots, such as pairs of bronze bits, sometimes beautifully adorned with 'late Celtic' ornament (Fig. 1), and frequently associated with a pair of objects which I have identified⁵ as rein-guiders

¹ Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100; Morel, *Champagne Souterraine*, p. 23, Pl. I. x., &c.

² Livy, x. 28-30.

³ Dio Cassius, lxxvi. 12 (*ex Xiph. epit.*).

⁴ Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 493-5.

similarly adorned, prove beyond doubt that chariots were in use in Ireland in the La Tène period.

Dr. P. W. Joyce¹ has pointed out that chariots were used in war in Ireland long after the period in which both Cuchulainn and Finn are

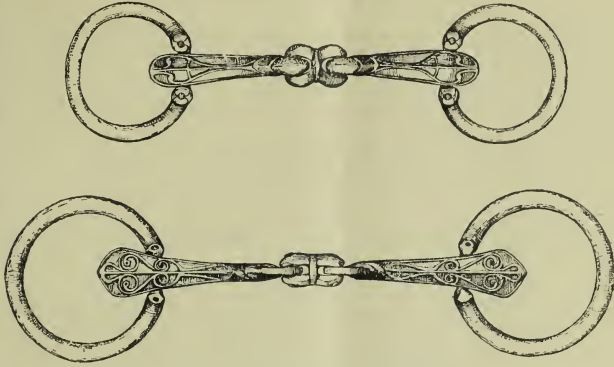


FIG. 1. Bronze Bits : Ireland.²

supposed to have flourished. For example, at the battle of Crinna near Slane in Meath (A. D. 254), Teige, the leader of the Munster forces, used a chariot, and was borne away in it from the field by his charioteer when severely wounded. Again, Dermot, king of Ireland,



FIG. 2. Base of Irish Cross at Clonmacnoise, King's Co., showing a chariot.

when preparing for the battle of Culdremne (A. D. 561), gathered an immense army of horse, foot, and chariots, whilst chariots are said to have played a prominent part in the great battle of Moyrath (A. D. 637), Adamnan, in his *Life of St. Columba* (p. 33), speaking of the battle of Ondemone or Moin-mor (A. D. 563), mentions that the Dalara-

¹ *A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, vol. ii, pp. 401 sqq.

² Both specimens are in the Irish Academy Museum. The larger is one of a pair found on the hard turf bottom of a bog at Atymon, Co. Mayo, in 1891. Cf. Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, p. 98, Fig. 45.

dian king, Eachaid Laib, escaped sitting in his chariot (*currui insidens*). Other passages cited by Dr. Joyce which show that Patrick, Brigit, Columba, and other saints and ecclesiastics regularly journeyed in chariots on their missionary expeditions, have no bearing on the question of the use of chariots in war, for there can be no doubt that they continued to be used for travelling purposes in Ireland (Fig. 2)

as in every other country (where they were originally used for war) long after they had ceased to form a military arm. Thus we read of chariots being used in England in A. D. 1154,¹ yet no one would think of arguing from such an allusion that the Normans of that century used war-chariots.

There is a vital difference between the method of warfare in the Cuchulainn epic and that portrayed in the Ossianic and later stories, for whilst fighting on horseback is entirely unknown to the older Saga, Finn and his comrades regularly fight in this fashion. Although in later centuries kings and chiefs went to battle in chariots, and contingents of chariots were employed at the battles of Culdremne and Moyrath, these stories in no wise prove that the military system was the same as in the Cuchulainn period. It might just as well be argued that because the Persians of the fifth century B. C., the Romans in the third century B. C., and the Seleucid kings of Syria at a still later date occasionally used war-chariots, the military system of those centuries was the same as that described in Homer, where no fighting ever takes place from horseback, but the chariot is universal. In all countries long after horsemen have become the important element in warfare, chariots continued to be used for some time longer as a military arm, especially when fitted with scythes or spears as was done by the Persians, Romans, and Syrians in the cases above cited.² The Cuchulainn epic, therefore, belongs to an age before the transition from chariots to cavalry had commenced.

But as the Gauls had entirely discarded the chariot for war (though retaining it for travelling) by B. C. 60, and as at the same date the Belgae had taken the first step towards the same end by employing cavalry as well as war-chariots, and as the Fianna, who seem to have



FIG. 3. Sword of La Tène type in sheath: Connantre, Marne.

¹ Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 307, 496-7.

used no chariots, began their domination by the second half of the second century A. D., it is most unlikely that the use of war-chariots without any cavalry continued in Ireland later than A. D. 100. But as a poet writing at a later date would almost certainly have

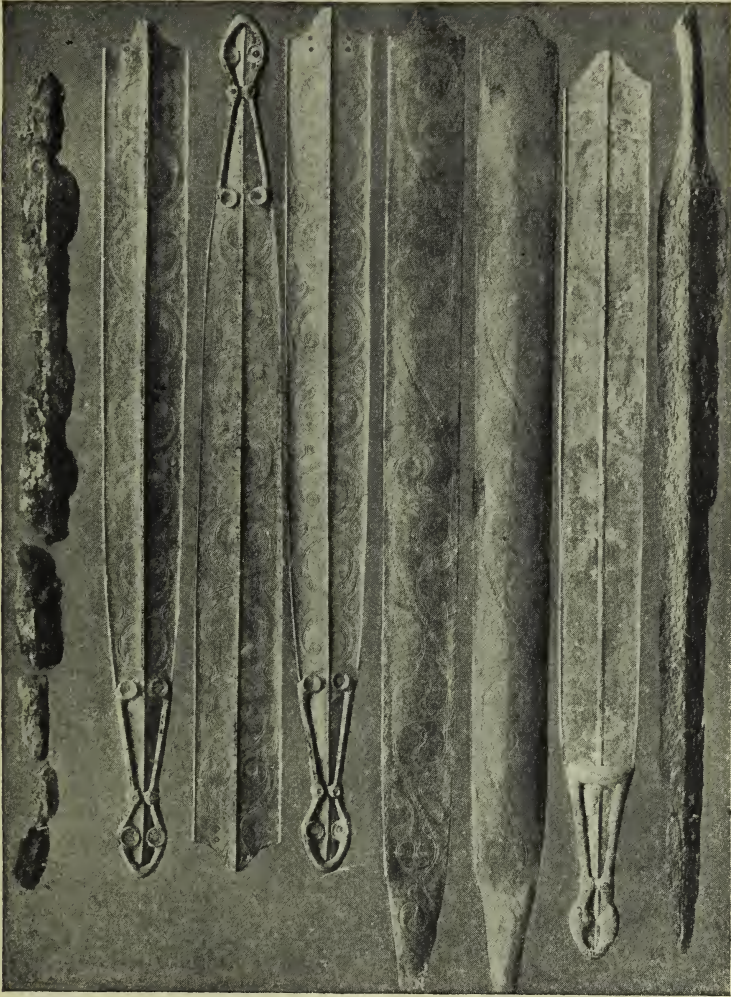


FIG. 4. Iron swords and bronze scabbards ; Lisnacroghera, Co. Antrim.

introduced the form of fighting of his own period (as is done in a preface to *The Tain*), there is a very high probability that the poem was first shaped before A. D. 100.

Swords. The Gauls of the La Tène period used iron swords

(Figs. 3, 11), which differed specifically from those of the preceding Hallstatt or Early Iron Age. These were the swords used by the Gauls in their battles against the Romans, and which are described by Polybius as being specially meant for a heavy, down-cutting stroke.

At Lisnacrogghera near Broughshane, Co. Antrim, a number of military weapons were found in a peat bog about 1883-4. Beyond doubt these relics belong to the La Tène culture. Of the four swords (Fig. 4) recovered up to 1890 only one is in good condition. Its total length is $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches including the handle. The blade has a sharply defined ridge and tapers to a point. The other swords are all fragmentary, one being still in its sheath.¹

In the Grainger Museum in Belfast there are several sheaths² (Fig. 4), only one of which, however, is complete, the rest being more or less fragmentary. They are all made of thin bronze, rivetted together at the margins, and over this there is a bead, which, towards the lower third, develops into an elegant ornamentation very similar to that on the sword-sheaths found at La Tène. The perfect sheath is devoid of ornamentation save that formed by the marginal bead; but the others (of which only one side of each remains) are highly decorated with designs formed by incised lines. These designs are of the characteristic La Tène style. It is supposed that the incised lines, which are sharply defined and deeply cut, contained enamel, but no traces of it now survive. There are also circular cavities in the surrounding bead at the tips probably intended for the reception of enamel. On two of the sheaths there is a transverse, raised band, meant to strengthen the sheath. Such bands are present on the sheaths from La Tène, in some cases being repeated at intervals on the sheath. The longest of these sheaths is 22 inches.

But by far the finest is the scabbard (Fig. 5) formerly belonging to Canon Greenwell, but now in the British Museum.³



FIG. 5.
Bronze Scabbard,
Lisnacrogghera.

¹ Munro, *Lake-dwellings of Europe*, pp. 382-4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 380-2.

³ I am indebted to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to use

There can be no doubt that the heroes of Ulster used swords adapted for delivering heavy down-strokes like those of the Gauls on the continent in the La Tène period. Thus Fergus, in his

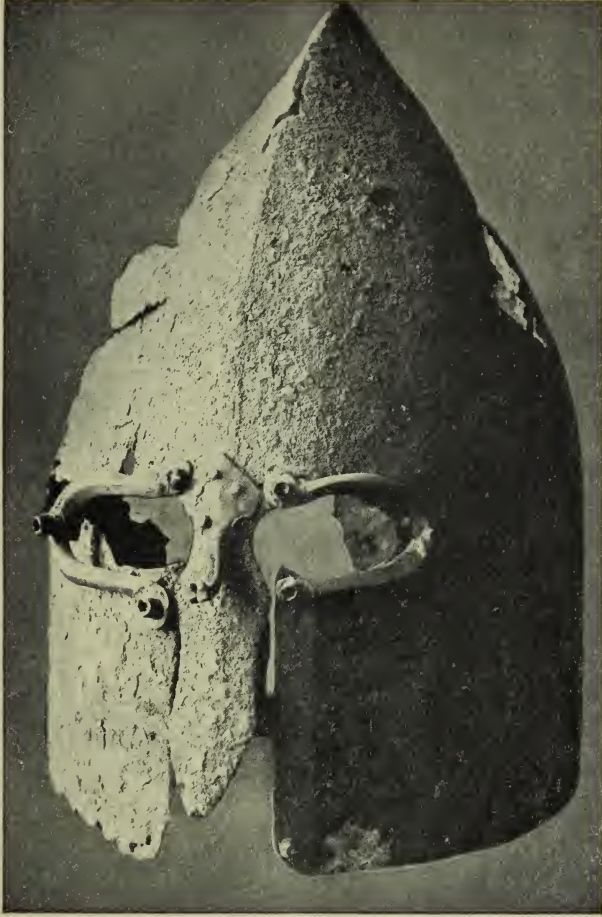


FIG. 6. Iron and Bronze Helmet; Saintfield, Co. Down.

onslaught on Conchobar, ‘aimed on him a blow of vengeance with his two hands on Conchobar, so that the point of the sword touched the ground behind him.’¹ Cuchulainn had ‘an ivory-hilted bright-faced weapon’.²

the illustration of this scabbard in the *Guide to the Antiquities of the Early Iron Age*, p. 148.

¹ *Tain Bo Cuabnge* (Faraday), p. 136.

² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Helmets. There can be no doubt that the Celts of the Early Iron Age used helmets of metal. Two helmets of bronze were found at Hallstatt, one at Glasinatz in Bosnia, whilst others belonging to the La Tène period have been found at Watsch in Carniola. The literary evidence puts it beyond dispute that they were employed by the Gauls of France in the La Tène period, for Diodorus Siculus¹ says that ‘they wear helmets of bronze with large projections which give the appearance of huge stature to the wearers. Some of these helmets have horns attached to them, whilst others have wrought on them the foreparts of birds or quadrupeds’. But the Gauls had helmets of iron as well as of bronze, since two made of the former metal have been found in France.

Dr. Joyce quotes² with approval Dr. O’Donovan’s remark, that ‘nothing has yet been discovered to prove what kind of helmet the ancient Irish *cathbharr* was, whether it were a cap of strong leather, checkered with bars of iron, or a helmet wholly of iron or brass, such as was used in later ages. One fact is established; that no ancient Irish helmet made of the latter materials has been as yet discovered’.

Down to the present time no undoubtedly ancient Irish helmet is known, the only possible claimant for such an honour being a remarkable helmet (Figs. 6, 7³) in the Belfast Museum. It was found (along with the basket hilt of a claymore) on a little island (a crannog?) in Killiney Lake near Saintfield, Co. Down, in 1835. The helmet, which has a somewhat classical aspect, is of iron worn thin by rust, but the guards round the eye-openings (Fig. 6) and the little nose-guard are all of bronze riveted on, as I am informed by Mr. R. Welsh and Mr. W. Swanston, F.G.S., who have most kindly re-examined the helmet for me. They are also agreed that the remains of rivets show that there was a bronze border or beading round the bottom to strengthen the iron. The eye-guards are each adorned with three small bosses with a deep cavity in each. These cavities probably once contained either enamel, or crystal, or possibly coral. As this form of decoration is a special characteristic of the La Tène culture, one is tempted at first to regard this helmet as a true relic of that period in Ireland, more especially, as we shall

¹ v. 30. 2 κράνη δὲ χαλκᾷ περιτίθενται μεγάλας ἐξοχὰς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν ἔχοντα καὶ παμμεγέθη φαντασίαν ἐπιφέροντα τοῖς χρωμένοις· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ πρόσκειται συμφυῆ κέρατα, τοῖς δὲ ὀρνέων ἢ τετραπόδων ζώων ἐκτετυπωμένοι προτομαί.

² Op. cit., vol. i, p. 124.

³ The illustrations of the helmets are (by permission) from photographs by Mr. R. Welsh, well known for his fine photographs of Irish antiquities.

shortly see that helmets so adorned are mentioned in one of the prefaces to *The Tain*, whilst there is actually a Gaulish helmet discovered in France adorned with red enamel, and, as we have just seen, it is almost certain that the cavities in the beads on the



FIG. 7. Iron and Bronze Helmet ; Saintfield ; Co. Down.

Lisnacrogghera scabbards were similarly filled. Yet all our leading authorities on ancient armour are agreed in holding that the Saintfield helmet belongs to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, although, strangely enough, no helmet exactly parallel to it is known either in any museum or in any representations on works of art.

In the version of *The Tain* in *The Book of the Dun Cow* ('Leabhar

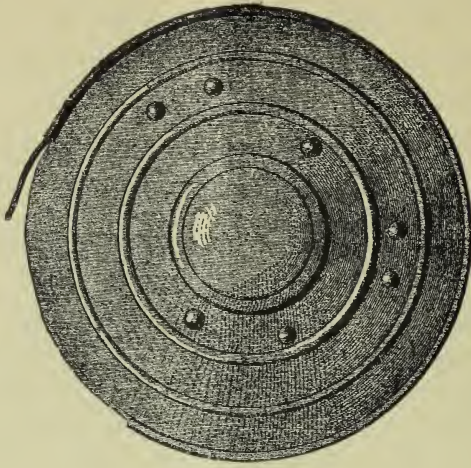


FIG. 8. Bronze Shield; Bingen.

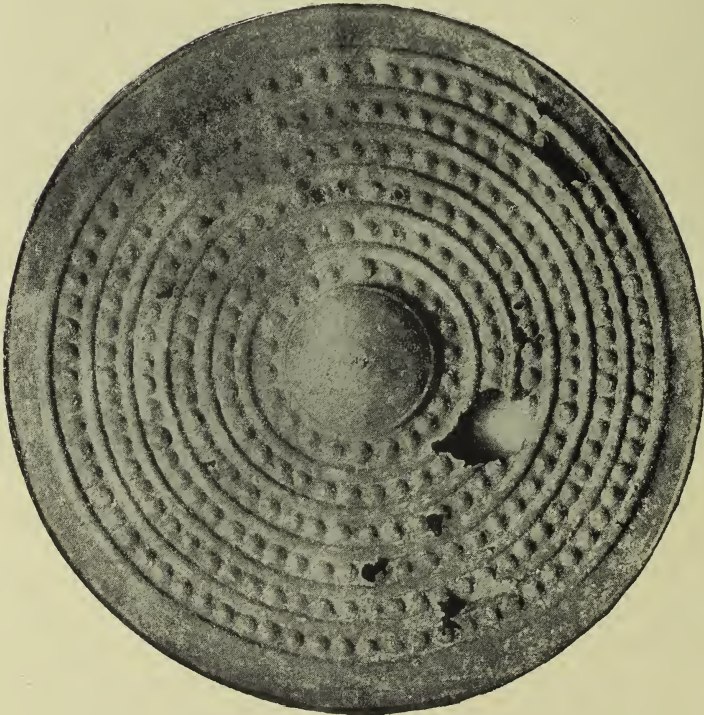


FIG. 9. Bronze Shield, Co. Limerick (front).

na h-Uidhri') both Cuchulainn and his charioteer are represented as wearing helmets.¹ The chieftain himself 'put on his head a ridged helmet of battle and conquest and strife, from which there was uttered the shout of a hundred warriors, with a long cry from every corner and every angle of it. For there used to cry from it equally goblins and sprites and ghosts of the glen, and demons of the air, before and above and around, wherever he used to go before shedding

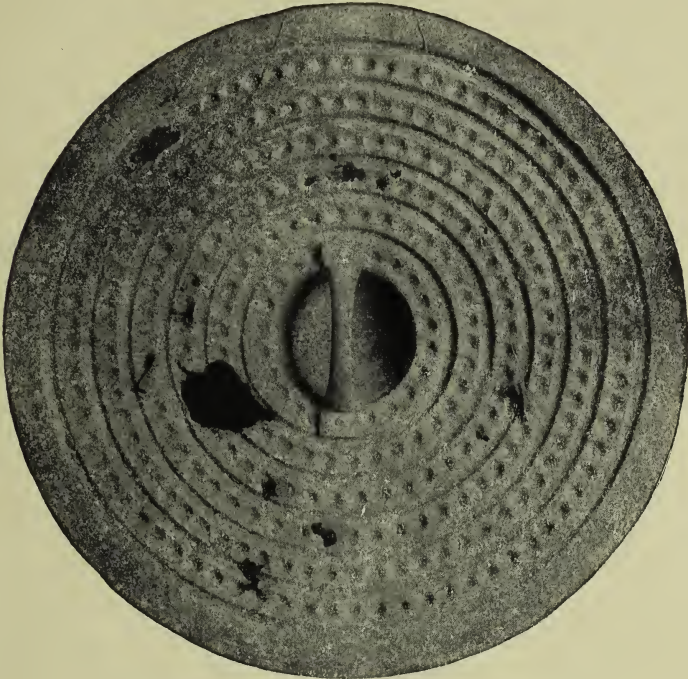


FIG. 10. Bronze Shield, Co. Limerick (back).

the blood of warriors and enemies'.² His charioteer wore a similar helmet, only that it was devoid of all supernatural accessories, and accordingly gives a true picture of the ordinary warrior's helmet: 'It was ridged like a board (?), four-cornered, with much of every colour and every form over the middle of his shoulders. This was well-measured (?) to him, and it was not an over-weight.'³

It will be noticed that both helmets have ridges, a feature to be

¹ M. d'Arbois de Jubainville says that the helmet is not mentioned at all in the most ancient Irish texts, and that wherever it is mentioned it indicates a relatively recent composition. But this is simply making an assumption and then using the assumption as a test of the age of a text.

² *Tain Bo Cualnge*, p. 89 (Faraday).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

seen in La Tène helmets.¹ The charioteer's helmet seems to have been furnished with a long crest hanging down the back of his neck. This feature can be at once paralleled from representations of warriors on a bronze girdle-plate found at Watsch.² Although the description of the helmets of Cuchulainn and his charioteer occur in a passage of the poem which is regarded as late because of its language, and of an allusion to Simon Magus, it does not at all follow that the main details of the armature are not taken from a far older document, the language of which was afterwards modernized, and into which the reference to Simon Magus was interpolated.

In one of the prefaces to *The Tain* there is a description of the armature and dress of the retinue of Bodhbh Dearg, the great Tuatha de Danann chief of the hill of Sliabh na-m-Ban in Co. Tipperary, when he went to visit his cousin Oichne, the great chief of the ancient hill of Cruachan in Co. Roscommon, afterwards the royal residence of the kings of Connaught: ³ 'Splendid was the caval-



FIG. 11. La Tène Sword in its Scabbard; Hallstatt.

cade that attended Bodhbh on the occasion. . . . Their helmets were adorned with crystals and white bronze; each of them had a collar (*niamkland*) of radiant gold around his neck with a gem worth a newly-calved cow set in it. Each wore a twisted ring of gold around him worth thirty ounces of gold,' &c. The use of bronze and crystals to adorn the helmets, ascribed by the writer of the preface (which is of course later than *The Tain* itself) to the Tuatha de Danann, at once reminds us of the Saintfield helmet.

Shields. There can be no doubt that the Gauls of Caesar's day used oblong shields (*scuta oblonga*), a form which some of them had adopted instead of the older round shield at least as early as the fourth century,⁴ though others of them may have retained for a considerable time longer their old round shields of the Bronze Age type (Figs. 8, 9). There can be no doubt that the Gauls of Noricum used the oblong shield in the La Tène period, for this is proved by an iron sword found along with an iron helmet of the La Tène type and other

¹ Much, *Kunsthistor. Atlas*, p. 119, Taf. li.

² *Ibid.*, p. 129, Taf. lv.

³ O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, &c., vol. iii, pp. 156-7.

⁴ Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, vol. i, pp. 477-8.

objects in a late grave at Hallstatt. The sword is in its sheath, which is adorned with figures of horsemen, whilst three footmen carry oblong shields and spears (Fig. 11).

To the La Tène period in Britain belong the two well-known *scuta* now in the British Museum.¹ One found in the River Witham is oval and has a highly decorated oval boss, in the centre of which are three pointed oval pieces of red coral, and there are two smaller studs

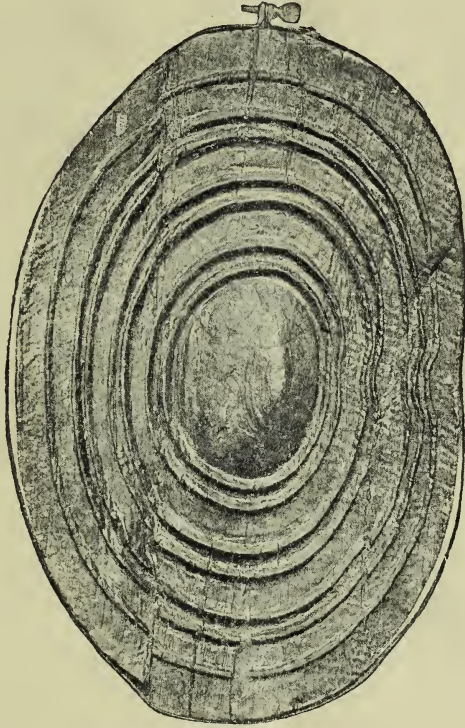


FIG. 12. Alder-wood Shield, Ireland.

of the same substance. The shield once bore the figure of a boar. The other, found in the Thames, is slightly curved inwards on its longer sides. It has a central boss decorated with wavy patterns in relief, of great technical excellence and beauty of design, enriched with red enamel.

To the same period I have referred² an oval Irish shield (Fig. 12) in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. It is made of alder-

¹ Kemble and Franks, *Horae Ferales*, p. 190, Plates XIV, XV; *British Museum Guide to the Early Iron Age*, p. 93.

² Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, p. 478, Fig. 100.

wood. It was found in 1863 ten feet deep in a bog at Kiltubride, Co. Leitrim.

We have just seen that the Belgic *scuta* found in Britain have bosses, whilst Diodorus¹ makes it clear that such too was the case with those of the Gauls. 'They use oblong shields (*θυρεοί*), as long as a man, adorned with a distinctive emblem. Some of them have



FIG. 13. Shield Ornaments; Lisnacrogghera.

projections consisting of animals in bronze, well wrought, not merely for ornament, but also to insure safety.'

Doubtless the boar which once adorned the Witham shield is one of the animal forms to which Diodorus refers. I here show (Fig. 13) several objects found at Lisnacrogghera, which have with much probability been regarded as the boss and other ornaments of a shield or shields.

There is no doubt that both round and oblong shields were used in Ireland, as is held both by O'Curry and Joyce. Though *lumman* was the generic name for a shield, the term *sciath* was also in use. Now, as this still means an oblong wicker basket, O'Curry argued that it was

¹ v. 30. 2.

an oval shield. Though the word cannot be phonetically equated with *scutum*, there can be little doubt that the *sciath*, like the *scutum*, was an oblong buckler. Cuchulainn's shield is described as 'round (*crum*), dark red, in which a boar that would be shown at a feast would go into the boss' (?). Miss Faraday rightly feels a doubt about this rendering, and in the light of what we have just seen of the boar as a device on a Belgic shield, not to speak of its frequent appearance as a crest on the helmets of Gaulish chiefs portrayed on Gaulish coins, I would venture to suggest that the meaning of this obscure phrase may be that on Cuchulainn's shield there was a boss which carried a boar as large as one that would be served at a feast. The poetical exaggeration is quite on a level with the rest of the description of his array.

In *The Tain* there may be two kinds of shields, for in the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster', given in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, some warriors are represented as having round (*crum*) shields with bosses, whilst one carries a 'bent shield' (*cuar*) with a boss. It is not unlikely that one of these is an oblong or oval shield, or one with incurved sides like the Thames buckler. Both *crum* and *cuar* are terms of vague meaning. *Crum* means *bent*, and might mean simply *oval*, whilst *cuar* does not appear to mean 'circular', but simply 'curving', as it is applied to a sickle. It would therefore be a suitable epithet for an oval shield or one with incurved sides. The shields are of various colours—red, white, black, grey, and ornamented with gold and silver. Dr. Joyce has pointed out that none but round shields are ever represented on the crosses or in the illuminated manuscripts. Moreover, it seems certain that the common shield in use in mediaeval Ireland was a round target. For example, the well-known shield in the possession of The O'Donovan¹ (Fig. 14) is of this shape. If, then, there are both round shields and those of a different type, probably oblong, in the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster', this indicates a tradition that in the early days the round shield was not the only form in use. But as the round shield was the type used in Ireland in the Bronze Age (Fig. 9), and as that type seems to have become again universal in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and as we have an actual specimen of an oval shield of the La Tène period found in Ireland, we must infer that the oblong shield had made its way into Ireland between the end of the Bronze Age and the early mediaeval period, by which time it had again gone out of fashion. But as we have not only an actual oval shield found in

¹ This shield is fully described in Ridgeway's *Early Age of Greece*, p. 464, Fig. 93.

Ireland, but also mention in *The Tain* of a type of shield which is certainly not circular, and most probably oval, we are justified in thinking that the poem must date from the La Tène period, or at least from an age not much later.

Dress. There can be no doubt that from the Early Iron Age, and we know not how much longer, the Celts had habitually worn two upper garments. This is clearly shown by the arrangement of the brooches found in the graves at Hallstatt. The first of these was the **Tunic**, an under garment or shirt, made either of leather or of some textile fabric. The other was the **Mantle**, known to the Romans as the *sagum* or *pallium Gallicum fibulatorium*, a cloak either of leather or of some textile fabric. This upper garment was fastened

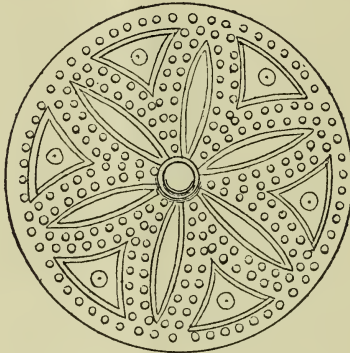


FIG. 14. The O'Donovan Shield; Skibbereen, Co. Cork.

either by a skewer of bone or wood or metal, or else by a **Brooch**. At some period before B.C. 400 the Gauls of the Danube valley had learned the use of **Bracæ**, or **breeches**, from their Scythian neighbours, for it seems not at all probable that the *bracæ* were an invention of north-western Europe. These breeches were made of leather or occasionally of some textile fabric. No better illustration of the costume worn by the Gauls in their battles with the Romans can be had than the account given by Polybius¹ of their appearance at the battle of Telamon: 'The Insubres and Boii were clothed in their breeches and light cloaks; but the Gaesatae from vanity and bravado threw these garments away, and fell in in front of the army naked. All the warriors in the front ranks were richly adorned with gold necklaces and bracelets,' the Romans 'were dismayed by the ornaments and clamour of the Celtic host. For there were among them

¹ ii. 28-30.

such innumerable horns and trumpets, which were being blown simultaneously in all parts of their army, and their cries were so loud and piercing'.

It will be noticed that Polybius makes no mention of tunics. It is quite possible that when campaigning the Celtic warriors only wore their *sagoi* and *anaxurides*.

That the *bracae* were often made of some striped material is rendered clear by a famous passage of Propertius,¹ who speaks of the chariot, the striped *bracae*, and the gold torque of the Belgic chieftain, Virдумarus.

Turning now to *The Tain*² we read that 'Cuchulainn put on twenty-seven skin tunics, waxed, like board, equally thick, which used to be under strings and chains and thongs against his white skin that he might not lose his mind nor his understanding when his rage should come. He put on his hero's battle-girdle over it outside, of hard-leather, hard, tanned, of the choice of seven ox-hides of a heifer, so that it covered him from the thin part of his sides to the thick part of his armpits; it used to be on him to repel spears, and points, and darts, and lances and arrows. Then he put on his breeches, skin-like, silken, with its edge of white gold variegated, against the soft lower part of his body. He put on his breeches of dark leather, well tanned, of the choice of four ox-hides of a heifer, with his battle-girdle of cow-skins (?) about it over his silken skin-like breeches.' His charioteer put on 'his soft tunic of skin, light and airy, well-turned, made of skin, sewn, of deer-skin, so that it did not restrain the movement of his hands outside. He put on his black (?) upper-cloak over it outside: Simon Magus had made it for Darius, king of the Romans, so that Darius gave it to Conchobar, and Conchobar gave it to Cuchulainn, and Cuchulainn gave it to his charioteer'. This last passage is certainly a late addition by some scholastic interpolator.

Though in an illumination in the *Book of Kells* a horseman (Fig. 15) is seen wearing breeches, it would seem that this garment

¹ iv (v). 10. 39 sqq. :

Claudius Eridanum traiectos arcuit hostes,
 Belgica cui uasti palma relata ducis,
 Virдумari : genus hic Rheno iactabat ab ipso
 Nobilis e rectis fundere gaesa rotis.
 Illi uirgatis iaculantis ab agmine braxis
 Torquis ab incisa decidit unca gula.

² pp. 87-8. The word *brog*, which Miss Faraday translates 'apron', following O'Curry, I have rendered 'breeches', since Zimmer (*Kuhn's Zeitschrift*, vol. xxx, p. 81) has conclusively shown that the word means *bracae*.

was not native to Ireland, for even in the fourteenth century the four kings of Ireland who visited King Richard II at Dublin did not wear these garments. The English accordingly had breeches of linen and cloth made for them, but there was 'great difficulty at the first to induce them to wear robes of silken cloth, trimmed with squirrel-skin or minever, for the kings only wrapped themselves up in an Irish cloak'.¹ Giraldus (*Top. Hib.* iii. 10) states that the Irish wore breeches ending in shoes, but there is no evidence that this combined garment was used in early times, any more than in the period after him. At most, the statements of Giraldus and Lynch could only apply to a small part of Ireland. Since the kings did not wear breeches, it is very unlikely that that garment was indigenous.

It would therefore appear that the *bracae* were simply intruders



FIG. 15. Irish Horseman; *Book of Kells*.

from Gaul in the La Tène period, and that they did not get any permanent vogue in Ireland.

In the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster' there are many descriptions of the cloaks and tunics worn by the various heroes, including those worn by the men of Muirtheimne, the hereditary patrimony of Cuchulainn. These were men with 'long, fair, yellow hair,' and they wore glossy, long, flowing cloaks with noble brooches (*deilge*) of gold, and had shirts of striped silk.

It will be noticed that Cuchulainn is represented as wearing leather breeches as well as those made of a textile, the leather being for protection. But he also wears a girdle of great breadth to protect his belly from wounds. Now this is no other than the wide girdle used by the Celts of the Hallstatt area and by the Umbrians for the same purpose, and which was also worn by the Homeric Achaeans under the name of *mitra*.²

¹ Froissart (*John's Trans.*), vol. ii, pp. 579-80.

² Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, p. 311, Fig. 58.

Those of bronze found in upper Italy and the Hallstatt area are as much as a foot in breadth at the widest part and taper to the ends which were fastened by catches at the wearer's back. Lineal descendants of these ancient girdles, but made of leather, are still worn in the Tyrol.

The reader will have noticed that the cloaks of the Tuatha de Danann warriors are invariably fastened with brooches like the *pallium Gallicum fibulatorium*.

The Celts of the Alps at a date anterior to B. C. 400 developed from their older fibulae, which had but one spring, those furnished with a spring on each side of the bow. They then modified a fibula of a type commonly termed Certosa, found in the Alps and in Bosnia as well as in Italy, by giving it this bilateral spring. This new type, known as the La Tène (Fig. 16), has played a great part in the history of the fibula. It extends from the Danubian

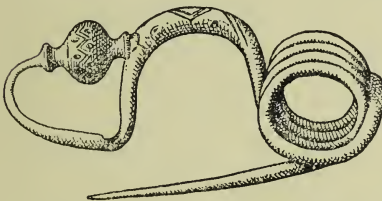


FIG. 16. Bronze Fibula; Marne.



FIG. 17. Leaf-shaped Fibula,
Navan Rath, Ireland.

regions to the valleys of the Seine and the Thames, and even to Ireland, as I have elsewhere shown. At the commencement of the Christian era the La Tène type had given birth to the Roman provincial fibulae, and those in turn were the parents of the brooches, which the Germanic peoples made in the first centuries after Christ in the epoch of the great migrations, and in Scandinavia at a much later date.

It is obviously very unlikely that either tunics, cloaks, or breeches of the La Tène period would have survived to the present time in Ireland, though of course it is not altogether impossible that such may be preserved in some peat bog, like the early garments found in Denmark. But I am fortunately able to show that in Ireland some six specimens of the latest forms of the La Tène fibula have been found. One of these found at Navan Rath is of a leaf-shape (Fig. 17), another brooch (Fig. 18), also in the Irish Academy collection, has a double spring and is also leaf-shaped, the veinings in the leaf being indicated. Of the other four specimens two are also from Navan Rath.¹

¹ Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, pp. 581 sqq., Figs. 133-9.

It will have been remarked that no fewer than three of the six La Tène brooches found in Ireland come from Navan Rath, once Emain Macha, the capital of Conchobar himself. In the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster', Conchobar's own mantle is fastened by a brooch of red gold. So too Cuscraid, the Stammerer, Conchobar's son, wore a green cloak folded round him, a brooch of gold over his arm. But, what is much more important for our purpose, (as Mr. Coffey has pointed out to me) Sencha Mac Aililla, 'the orator of Ulster, Conchobar's chief man, wore a cloak, dark gray, folded round him, a leaf-shaped brooch (*dealg n-duillech*) of white metal over his breast.' Now this epithet closely fits the leaf-shaped brooch (Fig. 17) from Navan Rath, and, still better, another Irish brooch (Fig. 18) which is undoubtedly meant to represent

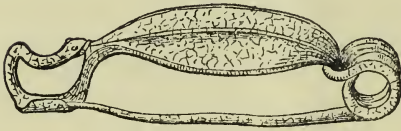


FIG. 18. Leaf-shaped Fibula, Ireland.

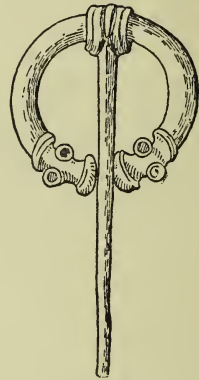


FIG. 19. Penannular brooch; Ireland.

a leaf, as the veining is indicated on its back. The epithet is utterly unsuited to the penannular brooch of the Tara (Fig. 19) and Scotch type, which was so common in Ireland at a later period. But the La Tène brooch was never common in Ireland, as is shown by the scanty number found in that island. Now as the La Tène brooch cannot have lasted in Gaul much later than the Christian era, for it was then completely supplanted by the Roman provincial types, and as it cannot have lasted in Britain much later than A. D. 100, it is most improbable that any bard writing in Ireland at any period much later than the first century A. D. would have represented his heroes as wearing brooches of the La Tène type. It may not be without significance that three out of the six known examples of this type of brooch found in Ireland should have been discovered at the site of the ancient home of Conchobar, the great Tuatha de Danann king,

whose physical characteristics, as we have seen above, are those of the Celts of Britain and the Continent, not those of the indigenous melanochrous race of Ireland.

Gold Ornaments. Polybius¹ tells us that when the Gauls entered Italy, they brought with them an abundance of gold ornaments and large droves of cattle, while the same writer mentions that at the battle of Telamon many of the Gallic warriors were adorned with gold torques. Manlius acquired the name of Torquatus for himself and his descendants from the fact that he put on himself the torque of a Gaul whom he had slain in single combat,² whilst from the passage of Propertius cited above it is clear that the wearing of such golden torques and collars was characteristic of the Belgic chiefs. Though the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy possesses a great wealth of torques and other ornaments of gold, almost all of these belong not to the Iron Age, but to that of Bronze. Indeed, it was only within the last fifteen years that gold ornaments, undoubtedly belonging the La Tène period, were discovered in Ireland. These are the famous gold objects found near Broughter, Co. Londonderry.³ These were acquired by Mr. R. Day, F.S.A., of Cork, and after being the subject of a long struggle between the British Museum and the Royal Irish Academy, have finally found their permanent resting-place in their proper home, the National Irish Museum. The objects comprised a small boat, a bowl, two chains of very fine fabric, two twisted neck-rings (torques), and a hollow gold collar with *repoussé* designs, 'beyond question the most magnificent object of its kind ever discovered' (Fig. 20). This collar is seven-and-a-half inches in diameter, and the section of its tube is one-and-one-eighth of an inch. The structure of the collar resembles that of one found at Frasnes in Belgium, whilst its curious fastening is similar to those found in some gold torques from Servies-en-Val, near Carcassonne, what was once the land of the Volcae Tectosages. The ornament consists of *repoussé* and engraved lines filling the vacant spaces in the interstices of the raised ornaments. These fine lines are curved and form more or less concentric groups. They were in nearly all cases executed with a compass, and they illustrate the process by which the harmonious curves of *repoussé* ornament were first sketched out. 'This compass-work, which must have also been employed in the original design of the *repoussé* ornament itself, plays a very important part in "Late-Celtic" ornament. It is well known on the mirrors, sheaths, and other objects of metal-

¹ ii. 19.

² Livy, vii. 10.

³ A. J. Evans, *Archaeologia*, vol. lv, pp. 397-408.

work, and has recently been found applied to woodwork decoration in the Glastonbury Lake-village, a fact which shows that the art had attained considerable development in our island before the Roman conquest of that part of Britain. But the best illustration of compass-work designing is supplied by the objects discovered in the so-called tomb of Ollamh Fodhla. A number of bone flakes



FIG. 20. Gold Collar ; Co. Londonderry.¹

were there found ornamented with a quantity of compass-work figures, and iron compasses were found with them.’²

In the story of the making of Cuchulainn’s shield, the poet tells us that the artificer designed its ornament by the aid of a ‘two-pronged fork’, i. e. a pair of compasses,³ ‘one of the prongs of which he planted in the ashes and with the other described the devices that were to be engraved on Cuchulainn’s shield. As compass-work was characteristic of the La Tène period, is found on works of art in Ireland, and the compasses themselves have been found associated

¹ From a photograph kindly made for me by my friend Mr. George Coffey.

² Evans, *loc. cit.*

³ O’Curry, *Manners and Customs, &c.*, vol. ii, p. 329.

with such work in the story of the making of Cuchulainn's shield, we have no late fragment but a passage written originally by one who was intimately acquainted with the methods of ornamentation used in the La Tène period.

The absence of any mention of gold torques or collars in the description of various costumes enumerated in the 'Muster of the Men of Ulster' is very noteworthy. But it is in strict conformity with the fact that scarcely any gold ornaments of the La Tène period have been found in Ireland.

Now as nothing could be more tempting to a poet of a later date than to array his heroes with golden collars, the writer of *The Tain* refrained from ascribing such adornments to his characters because he simply described what he saw; and as such ornaments were very rare in Ireland in the La Tène period, the poem first probably originated in that epoch.

Writing. The Gauls had learned to use the Greek alphabet from the people of Massalia, and though after the Roman conquest of Provence they gradually adopted the Roman script, yet Greek letters continued to be used occasionally in inscriptions on their very numerous and important series of coins. Many Gallic inscriptions are now known both from France and Italy, whilst Caesar¹ tells us that after the overthrow of the Helvetii he found in their camp records written in 'Greek letters' (*litteris Graecis*). He also mentions that his soldiers intercepted a dispatch sent by one Gaulish chieftain to another, and that it too was written in Greek letters (*litteris Graecis*). When the Belgic tribes settled in Britain, they brought with them the art of writing, and though most of the British coins are uninscribed, a considerable number bear inscriptions in some of which the Greek theta is to be met, as, for instance, in the names Addedomarus and Antedrigus, but the coins of Cunobelin, Tasciovanus, and others show that the Belgic alphabet was practically the Latin.

That the Irish had the art of writing at an early date is proved by the existence of many inscriptions in the Ogham script, which is, as is now generally admitted, based upon the Latin alphabet, which, as I have just pointed out, had practically become the alphabet of the Gauls and the Belgic tribes of Britain by the Christian era. There is, therefore, no reason why Belgae who settled in Ireland in the first two centuries preceding the birth of Christ should not have carried with them the art of writing which they were practising in their old homes.

¹ *B.G.*, i. 29. 1; cf. vi. 14. 3.

Ogham inscriptions contain linguistic forms of Irish words identical with those found on Gaulish inscriptions, and which are older than the forms known in the oldest Irish glosses. On this ground Dr. Whitley Stokes¹ holds that some of the people of these islands wrote their language before the fifth century A. D., the date of the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. But the fact that not only the Gauls, but also the Belgic tribes of Britain were making a free use of writing in the Latin alphabet before the Christian era, combined with the antiquity of the forms in Ogham script, renders it highly probable that the art of writing had reached Ireland from Gaul or Britain at a time anterior not merely to the introduction of Christianity, but even to the birth of Christ. As the Gauls of the La Tène period had the art of writing, it would be indeed strange if there were no allusions to it in the oldest epic, supposing it to belong to that period, whilst, for the reasons just given, the mention of letters does not in the least necessitate that any passage in which such a reference occurs should be later than the first century before or after Christ. *The Tain* does contain such a reference²: 'Then they reached Mag Mucceda. Cuchulainn cut an oak before them there, and wrote an ogham in its side. It is this that was therein: that no one should go past it till a warrior should leap it with one chariot. They pitched their tents there, and come to leap over it in their chariots. There fall thereat thirty horses, and thirty chariots are broken. Belach n-Ane, that is the name of that place for ever.'

Several other classes of evidence may be cited in favour of the existence in Ireland of a people who had the culture of the La Tène period, though I may not as yet be able to point to such usages or objects in the oldest epic.

Cremation. The Celts of the Hallstatt period and their Umbrian brethren practised cremation, and though in the first part of the La Tène period in Gaul inhumation seems to have prevailed in the valleys of the Marne and Seine, yet by Caesar's time cremation was the regular way of disposing of the dead. The Belgic cemetery discovered at Aylesford in Kent also puts it beyond doubt that the Belgae of Kent had the same usage.

Cremation never got much hold in Ireland, though in various parts of that country, more especially in the north-east, urns containing human remains have come to light. The practice seems to have died out before Christianity came in, for though there are many accounts of the burials of great personages, there is no record of any case

¹ *Three Irish Glossaries*, lv-lvi; Joyce, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 400.

² p. 35 (Faraday).

of cremation. The only certain reference to its practice occurs in an ancient Irish canon, written or rather copied in the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century, but then attributed by the writer to the time of St. Patrick (fifth century).¹ The old writer, in referring to different forms of burial, alludes to the cremating of the body as if it were an ancient practice of which tradition alone survived.

Though we cannot cite any tradition to connect the practice of cremation with the fair-haired Tuatha de Danann, nevertheless a curious piece of archaeological evidence indicates that it was introduced by people of the La Tène period from Gaul.

In 1903 Mr. George Coffey² found in the centre of a small tumulus near Loughrea, Co. Galway, a cremated burial 'on the level of the old surface of the ground. It rested on a rude block of stone, and consisted of an almost plain urn inverted over the burnt bones. Directly above the bones lay the skeleton of a woman with its head to the west, and beside it were the remains of a small horse, which lay on its left side with the head to the west', and which had been probably buried along with the human body. The woman was probably a slave killed to be the guardian of her master's grave. The practice of killing a female slave and not burning her body, in order that her spirit might keep watch over the cremated remains of her lord, is well known from the Early Iron Age cemeteries of Este and Bologna.³

Now the practice cannot have been indigenous or it would certainly have continued until suppressed by Christianity, and accordingly we must look upon it as having been merely introduced from some other country. But as the Celts of Gaul and Britain were practising cremation, and as we have traditions of invaders from Gaul, and as Conchobar and his people agree in physique, dress, and arms with the Celts of the La Tène period, we have another argument for the existence in Ireland of a people with that culture.

Horses. By the time of Caesar the Gauls were famous for their horses, and in the Roman writers of the age of Augustus there are constant references to the Gallic *manni* which were brought to Rome from Liguria and Provence. The remains of Helveto-Gallic horses have been found on the site of the settlement of La Tène, and the measurements of these animals correspond very

¹ Joyce, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 547.

² *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, vol. xxv, see C, no. 2, p. 14; Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, pp. 398-9.

³ Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, vol. i, pp. 497, 505.

closely with those of the modern *camargues* of Provence. The latter, I have endeavoured to show,¹ are descended from the ancient *ginni* or *manni* of the Ligurians, and are usually grey in colour. Now it is curious to note that the measurements of the horse found in the tumulus near Loughrea² correspond very closely to those of the horses found at La Tène and to those of the modern grey *camargue* of Provence.

I have shown³ that before Roman times there were already in Gaul two breeds of superior horses, the one grey, the other black; the former is represented to this day not only by the *camargues* of Provence, but by the famous grey Percherons, the latter by the horses of Ariège, of Auvergne, of Morvan, and of Brittany, all of which are closely related to the old Irish horses known as Hobbies, whose posterity still survives in some Connemara ponies. That these horses had got into Ireland at a very early date is made certain by various considerations. A description of Cuchulainn's horses is given in the *Wooring of Emer*⁴: 'They were alike in size, beauty, fierceness, and speed. Their manes were long and curly and they had curling tails. The right-hand horse was a grey horse, broad in the haunches, fierce, swift, and wild; the other horse jet-black; his head firmly knit, his feet broad-hoofed and slender.' 'That was the one chariot which the host of the horses of the chariots of Ulster could not follow on account of the swiftness and speed of the chariot and of the chariot-chief who sat in it.'

As I have shown⁵ that black and grey horses are the result of blending the North African horse (e. c. *Libycus*), which is bay, with the indigenous dun horses of upper Europe and Asia, the horses of Cuchulainn could not be any indigenous Irish breed, but were, as their description shows, a far superior stock to the ordinary horses known in Ireland. But as their colours tally with those of French breeds which date from the La Tène period, and the measurements of the horse found with cremated remains near Loughrea correspond to those of the horses of La Tène itself, Cuchulainn is thus the owner of horses of the typical La Tène breeds, whilst the practice of cremation is found in close connexion with the remains of such a horse.

Trumpets. There can be no doubt that the Celts of the La Tène period regularly used horns or trumpets in war. At the battle of Telamon they had a vast number of men who sounded horns

¹ *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, pp. 321, 399.

² Scharff, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, loc. cit.

³ Ridgeway, *Thoroughbred Horse*, pp. 323 sqq.

⁴ pp. 197-8 (trans.).

⁵ *Thoroughbred Horse*, p. 261.

(βυκάναι) and trumpets (σάλπιγγες)¹, the former being a curved instrument, like the Latin *bucina*, borrowed by the Romans, the latter probably straight with curving mouth, like the Roman *lituus*. Diodorus² also mentions the Gallic trumpets (σάλπιγγες), though he makes no mention of the *bukane*, whilst works of art show us the Gallic war-horn at a still earlier period. Thus it appears on coins³ struck by the Aetolians after the repulse of the Gauls from Delphi in B. C. 279. It also appears lying on the ground beside the famous statue of the Dying Gaul.

In Ireland a considerable number of bronze horns have been found (Fig. 21), the Royal Irish Academy Museum possessing no fewer than twenty-six, whilst there are a good many examples in the British

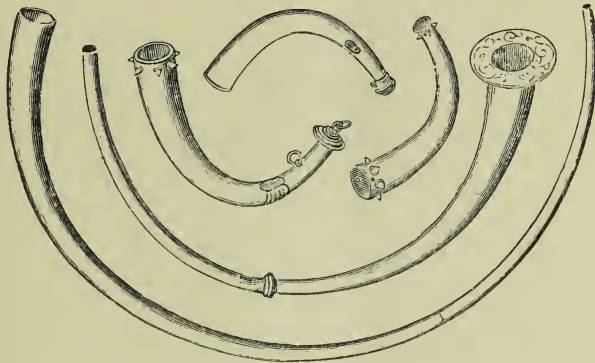


FIG. 21. Bronze Trumpets; Ireland.⁴

Museum, and others scattered in private collections. They are of two kinds. In the first (A) the instrument was cast in a single piece; in the other (B) it was formed by bending and riveting together sheets of metal. Class A falls into three subdivisions: (1) those blown from the smaller end, (2) those inflated by a lateral opening near the smaller extremity, which ends in a solid boss, (3) a straight tube with curved mouth (*lituus*). As horns were comprised in the find at Dowris, King's Co., which from the celts with sockets of oval form and other considerations must fall late in the Bronze Age, though not at its end, there can be no doubt that bronze horns were already in use at that period in Ireland. Again, as both forms of Class A were included in the Dowris find (probably the hoard of a bronze-founder), it is clear that the type with the lateral opening

¹ Polybius, ii. 29.

² v. 30.

³ Head, *Historia Numorum*, p. 284.

⁴ For the use of this and the following block I have to thank the Council of the Royal Irish Academy.

was already known at that epoch, though we may assume with safety that it was later in origin than the other, which is simply the cow's horn translated into bronze. But it is more than highly probable, as is held by Sir John Evans,¹ that a considerable number of the known specimens belong to the Iron Age. For example, in 1794, four horns were found in a bog near Armagh, one of which, measuring 6 feet long, has at its larger end a disc embossed with the scroll-pattern characteristic of the La Tène period (Fig. 22). This specimen, as well as another from Co. Down measuring 8 feet 5 inches in length, is made by bending and riveting thin sheets of bronze. Though the



FIG. 22. Mouth of La Tène Trumpet ; Armagh, Ireland.

larger specimen has no distinctive ornament, we may infer from its form and technique that it also belongs to the La Tène epoch.

As the decorated horn was found near Armagh—the very district in which was situated the capital of Conchobar—from whence also three of the La Tène brooches above mentioned have come, the coincidence seems to be not without significance.

As no riveted horn and hardly any cast examples have been discovered in Britain, we may infer that Ireland was in direct communication with Gaul, not only in the La Tène period but even in the Bronze Age, and accordingly did not depend on Britain for her forms of Continental culture. But the question naturally arises, Why did not the Belgic tribes of Britain introduce the horn into that island when they came thither from Gaul? The explanation is probably due to the circumstance that the Irish derived their bronze horns from Central France, most likely from the mouth of the Loire from the inhabitants of Gallia Celtica. It is in the hands of Gauls

¹ *Bronze Implements*, p. 362.

who are declared to have passed into Italy and elsewhere from that region that we meet them in classical authors and in works of art. On the other hand, as England was invaded by the tribes from Gallia Belgica, who were Cimbrians who had crossed the Rhine at quite a recent date, and as no bronze horns like the Irish are found in Scandinavia, we may conclude that the Belgae, unlike their kins-



FIG. 23. Carved Stone ; Turoc, Co. Galway.

folk who had entered Gaul centuries before and had settled and become the overlords of the indigenous population of Central Gaul, did not use bronze horns.

Carved Stones. Within the last few years another class of La Tène monument has been discovered in Ireland. In 1903 Mr. George Coffey¹ described a stone first noticed by Lord Walter Fitzgerald at Mullaghmas, Co. Kildare, which is now deposited in

¹ *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, vol. xxiv, Section C, no. 14. 'Some Monuments of the La Tène period recently discovered in Ireland' (all three being well figured).

the Royal Irish Academy collection. The carving on the stone is of the type commonly known as 'trumpet' pattern in Ireland. In the same year Mr. Coffey's attention was called by Mrs. Coote, of Carrowroe, to a stone at Castle Strange near Roscommon, which also proved to be carved with 'trumpet' pattern, but 'this time the La Tène character of the ornament was unmistakable'. Soon after this Mr. Coffey found a third stone at Turoe near Loughrea, Co. Galway, the most remarkable of the three examples, being richly carved with La Tène ornament in bold relief (Fig. 23).¹

Whilst in the case of objects of a portable character it might be argued that they were 'wanderers' from Britain or from Gaul (as was maintained in the controversy over the famous gold ornaments mentioned above) and accordingly cannot be taken as any proof of the settlement in Ireland of Celts, it would be absurd to contend that these ponderous stones were wrought in Gaul or Britain, where none such have as yet been found, and were thence shipped to Ireland. Since the Irish craftsmen could develop new types for themselves, as is proved by the riveted trumpets, there is no reason why they could not hew and carve these three most noteworthy *stelae*.

From this survey of the material remains of the La Tène period found actually in Ireland, and from the striking correspondence between this culture and that depicted in the *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, and from the further circumstance that the race who are represented in the epic as possessing this form of culture resemble, in their physique, the tall, fair-haired, grey-eyed Celts of Britain and the Continent, we are justified in inferring (1) that there was an invasion (or invasions) of such peoples from Gaul in the centuries immediately before Christ, as is asserted by the Irish traditions, and (2) that the poems themselves originally took shape when the La Tène culture was still flourishing in Ireland. But as this could hardly have continued much later than A.D. 100, we may place the first shaping of the poems not much later than that date and possibly a century earlier.²

¹ My illustration (p. 33) is from a photograph which Mr. Coffey has kindly taken for me from the cast of the stone now in the Irish Academy collection, whose views on the subdivision of cast trumpets I have also followed.

² I must acknowledge my debt to my friend Mr. E. C. Quiggin, Fellow and Lecturer of Gonville and Caius College (author of *A Dialect of Donegal*) for his generous help on various linguistic points.